

Orange County Republicans and the party's politicians representing Newport-Mesa statewide and nationally must like their chances going into the 2010 electoral season, now that the GOP has pulled off a stunning victory in Massachusetts.

Scott Brown's Tuesday win, deep inside Democratic territory, snapped up a U.S. Senate seat for the Republicans, which for decades had belonged to the late Ted Kennedy. This followed two big GOP victories in New Jersey and Virginia. The Massachusetts upset also weakened the Democrats' grip on both houses of Congress, stripping them of a filibuster-proof supermajority in the Senate. It almost certainly has doomed their chances of passing the bitterly fought health-care-reform bill.

"The Massachusetts election indicates a widespread dissatisfaction with the goals and methodology of the current Democrat majority and the president," U.S. Rep. Dana Rohrabacher said. "If that's true in liberal Massachusetts, it's likely true elsewhere, including California."

What happened last week can only buoy a quartet of area Republicans — U.S. Rep. John Campbell, State Sen. Tom Harman and State Assemblymen Van Tran and Chuck DeVore — who this year will be defending their seats or vacating them to challenge incumbents in higher offices.

"Since the 2008 elections, the thought du jour in California has been the Democrats will sweep the governor's office, the U.S. Senate and keep all their legislative seats. This election shows that Americans are watching," said Harman, who's running for election as state attorney general.

Echoed Tran: "What we saw in Massachusetts this week is a demand for change that is deep and palpable throughout America — especially right here in Orange County."

Campbell likened Massachusetts to a tide lifting up the fleet of Republicans boats.

“It wasn’t just a big wave. It was a tsunami,” he said.

While the congressman represents Orange County, one of the nation’s Republican strongholds, he says he’s not taking lightly the challenge being mounted by Democrat Beth Krom, the former Irvine mayor and councilwoman.

Krom acknowledges that the odds of unseating Campbell are against her. Still, she likes her chances, despite her party’s blowing it in Massachusetts.

“I don’t see it as a setback. What I do think is that the voters of Massachusetts seem to be indicating that they are more interested in voting for a person rather than a party,” Krom said, alluding to her prospects for picking up swing votes and winning over some of those rock-ribbed Republicans.

And, who knows? Krom might even pull off a Scott Brown-like upset in Orange County. Either way, we wish her, Campbell and all of the other candidates best of luck for their 2010 campaigns.